Watergate Probers to Hold Hearings On $100,000 Hughes Paid Rebozo

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The Senate select watergate committee plans to hold a week of public hearings on the secret $100,000 cash payment made in 1969 and 1970 by billionaire recluse Howard Hughes to C. G. (Bebe) Rebozo, President Nixon's close friend, committee sources said yesterday.

Sources said the committee would like to subpoena the elusive Hughes, if he can be located. When last heard from, Hughes was reported living in London.

Both the committee and the former special prosecutor's office have been investigating the Hughes' payments to determine whether the Nixon administration, in return for the $100,000, dropped its antitrust objection to Hughes' plan to acquire another Nevada casino in 1970.

In addition to Hughes, the committee also intends to call Rebozo; former Hughes' top aide Robert A. Maheu, Hughes' casino operator Richard G. Danner, and Hughes' lawyer, Chester C. Davis, sources said.

Maheu, in a sworn deposition he has given in a libel suit against Hughes, said that the first payment was made to Rebozo by Danner, acting for Hughes, at Key Biscayne Fla., in 1969. The second was made by Danner at the summer White House in San Clemente, Calif., in 1970, Maheu has said.

Rebozo reportedly has told the committee that he kept the money in a safety deposit box for three years, that he did not report it as a campaign contribution, and that he returned it to Hughes through Davis earlier this year.

Danner reportedly made three trips to Washington in 1970 to ask then-Attorney General John N. Mitchell to override the department's antitrust division and permit Hughes to acquire the Dunes hotel-casino. Mitchell gave approval for the acquisition, but the deal later fell through and Hughes did not make the purchase.

Danner reportedly has told the committee that Mitchell was unaware of the $100,000 payment when Mitchell cleared the Dunes acquisition in the late summer of 1970.

Sources said the committee will take up campaign financing when it resumes its hearings next Tuesday, but that the Hughes's contribution will not be taken up immediately. A committee meeting, scheduled for today, has been canceled.

In other action, the committee notified U.S. District Court Chief Judge John J. Sirica yesterday that it intends to grant immunity in return for testimony to eight executives of the American Ship Building Co., of Lorain, Ohio. Last month, it was reported that the special prosecutor's office was investigating $25,000 in campaign contributions made by officials of the company to President Nixon's re-election campaign last year.

After making their contributions, the eight were reimbursed by "corporate bonuses" the same day, prosecutors alleged. Federal law prohibits corporate contributions.